

Conclusions of the session on Sustaining Regional Institutions in LME, Groundwater and Freshwater at IWC8

Sustainable institutions - institutions with a strong legal mandate and a sound technical capacity - are a prerequisite for sustainable GEF interventions and more in general for effective transboundary water management. Their role will become even more important in the face of growing water challenges (water scarcity and competing water uses, climate variability and change...).

Building and strengthening sustainable institutions requires establishing trust and confidence, levelling the playing field and (regularly) defining a common vision.

Building sustainable agreements and institutions is a long term process, measured in decades, during which all opportunities need to be taken to make the next step. Each process is different and solutions need to be adapted to the basin.

Support from outside actors – financial, technical and political – for transboundary cooperation processes is an advantage. In particular, GEF's role in building sustainable institutions has been in many cases very effective.

Transboundary cooperation, including GEF interventions, should build on and make use of the existing global legal frameworks, namely the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention), and the Convention on the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses. More capacity building is needed in this respect.

A main common challenge is to ensure inclusiveness of cooperation (inclusion in the cooperation of all relevant issues, groundwater and surface water / freshwaters and coastal zones, all concerned national actors and stakeholders, and all basin countries).

Different actors, including GEF, need to work together to leverage the needed political will for transboundary cooperation. Demonstrating that the benefits of cooperation outweigh the risks can be a useful instrument.

Ensuring financial sustainability of river basin organizations is a significant challenge. In the long term, institutions need to be funded by their Member States. Financial mechanisms such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) can bring resources.